

Report Required

Provo Canyon Road Delayed For Months

7 Apr 1971 Provo Herald

A road construction project in Provo Canyon between Olmstead and Nunns originally scheduled to be advertised for bids in early April is now delayed, according to Wayne S. Winters, a member of the state Road Commission.

The Highway Department sent a letter announcing the delay, which could be for several months, to governmental officials in five counties: Utah, Wasatch, Duchesne, Uintah and Summit Counties.

Since the original schedule was made, the Federal Highway Administration has implemented regulations to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969,

which requires an environmental impact statement to be prepared and reviewed by the President's Council on Environmental Quality, according to Mr. Winters.

He added that the Provo Canyon project, planned as a four-lane, limited access highway, is one which has just recently been placed under the requirements of these regulations. The state has planned to buy right-of-way for the four-lane road, but only build two lanes for the time being. The road would essentially follow a different route than the existing Provo Canyon road, which would be retained as a means of getting

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Provo Canyon

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to some areas of the canyon and the river. It could be used for sight-seeing, and would be maintained by the county, according to plans.

Commissioner Winters said that it will take some time to prepare the environmental impact report for submission to Federal authorities, and stressed that great care was being taken to make the report of high quality. He said he felt confident the report would receive approval of the Federal Highway Administration and the President's council.

Mayors and county commissioners in the five counties named received the letter from Commissioner Winters. Mr. Winters said that the design of the road was "pretty much the same" as aired at hearings late last year.

Provo Herald 7 Apr 1971

Governor Raps Head Of Canyon Group for Injecting 'Politics'

Governor Calvin L. Rampton this morning sternly questioned the sincerity of the chairman of the Citizens Committee for Provo Canyon, D. Allan Firmage, after the governor had received a copy of a letter that Mr. Firmage had directed to former Utah Representative Laurence J. Burton in Washington.

Mr. Burton, who is now Congressional liaison in the

Capital, received the letter through the office of the Secretary of the Department of Transportation.

The key point that Governor Rampton questions in the letter concerns this statement: "I believe the Republicans have a great chance to damage Governor Rampton politically if the Department of Transportation could move in and call a halt to the highway until the citizens are satisfied. However, I believe the governor will soon see that politically he has to call a halt. I have some reliable reports that he intends to do this as soon as he gets sufficient letters. Any move by the Department of Transportation must be soon."

Not Political

The governor, in an interview this morning with The Herald, stated, "I regret that Dr. Firmage has chosen to inject politics into this matter because it is not a political matter."

"When he (Mr. Firmage) says that the Republicans have a great chance to damage Governor Rampton politically, I doubt if any leaders of the Republican Party want to play politics with a matter of this deep public concern."

Continuing, the governor said, "The letter does throw doubt on the sincerity of Dr. Firmage in leading this group. It appears that his motive is political and not ecological."

Governor

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the governor himself explained why his office had done so.

The governor said, "If the people of Utah and Wasatch Counties do not want the road improved, certainly the state does not want to force the issue. However, I can't judge public opinion by letter writing campaigns."

"In a democracy," the governor continued, "the people speak through their properly elected officials. Both city and county officials continue to assure us that they want to continue with plans for the road."

Reasons Given

The governor explained that this was why his office had asked the citizens to write to the locally elected officials. The city and county officials several times have verbally favored the road.

Mr. Swenson said that the Highway Commission had stated that they had had 82 meetings with various persons concerning the canyon project.

The governor, in giving the background for the present road, said that plans which went back for many years called for three arterial routes through the Wasatch Mountains. The routes were through Weber Canyon, Parleys Canyon and one in Utah County.

Funds Withheld

The governor said funds for the Utah County project have been withheld to complete the project in Weber and now in Parleys, but while the project had to be delayed because of lack of funds, the promise was made that the road through Utah County would be completed.

"Unless the local officials will say we don't want the road, I feel the state is bound by its commitment." The governor went on to say that he wants to make sure the road "lies as lightly on the land as possible."

The letter from Mr. Firmage was signed by him as "Chairman and Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, Brigham Young University."

Mr. Firmage, in his letter, also stated, "I had a brief meeting with Mr. Robert Redford last night and he stated that he had a call from the governor's office yesterday (February 10th) asking him to please let up and to tell the people to direct their letters to the local officials and to leave the governor alone."

Called Redford

Ron Swenson, administrative assistant to the governor, said this morning that he had called Mr. Redford and advised the people to write local officials and

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Canyon Group's Chairman Replies to Governor on Road; Reasserts His Goals

Provo Herald 8 Apr 1971
The chairman of the Provo Canyon Citizens Committee has expressed indignation that a "private letter" which he wrote to former Utah Representative Laurence J. Burton, now Congressional liaison with the Department of Transportation, should be made public in apparent attempts to discredit the group opposed to a four-lane, limited-access freeway in the canyon.

Gov. Calvin L. Rampton Wednesday made public a letter Mr. Firmage wrote to former Representative Burton in which he said Republicans could damage the governor politically by calling a halt to the road project until the citizens were satisfied with the design. Gov. Rampton said he questioned Mr. Firmage's sincerity and his concern for ecology.

Preserve Beauty

Mr. Firmage reasserted his interest in preserving the canyon's natural beauty. "My only motives are those of a private citizen trying to save Provo Canyon," he said.

Mr. Firmage said he didn't know how the letter had become public.

Mr. Firmage stressed that his letter, dated Feb. 11, came the day after a meeting with the State Road Commission, "in which we had essentially been

told that our feelings would be ignored and the road would be built as planned." Mr. Firmage said he wrote to the governor on Jan. 8 and requested a moratorium, listing nine points of procedure his committee felt should be followed before the construction on the road went ahead. "I've never to this day received any reply from the governor's office," said Mr. Firmage.

'Desperate Measures'

"Since the April 1 date had been publicly announced as the
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Canyon Group

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date when the state would advertise for bids," continued Mr. Firmage, "our committee felt we had to take desperate measures, political or otherwise, to affect a moratorium."

Since the Federal Transportation Department has requested that the state submit an environmental impact report on the Provo Canyon project, Mr. Firmage hasn't pursued the matter any further, he says.

"Since the Department of Transportation will provide 75 percent of the funds for the road, we felt we should go to the origin to see if a stoppage could be made," explained Mr. Firmage.

"We didn't want to make this a political issue," he continued, "but since the governor is a political person, and since he was the only one who could call a halt to the road, I took political action."

But he laughingly added, "I don't have any personal political ambitions, and I don't intend to run for governor."

'Passing Buck'

Mr. Firmage said the governor was "passing the buck" when he urged citizens to write to city and county officials. "The road department has a history of ignoring city and county officials," he said. "I've heard that Springville has had problems in this regard."

He said he and members of his committee had spoken with Provo Mayor Verl G. Dixon and County Commissioner Paul Thorn. "It appeared to us that they were taking a 'hands-off' attitude toward the road," said Mr. Firmage.

The Provo Canyon Citizens Committee isn't political, he asserted. "I'm sure we have Republicans and Democrats on the committee," he said, "and I don't know who's what. The only political discussion that takes place in our meetings is how to exert political pressure to stop a four-lane, limited access road in Provo Canyon."

Congress Contacts

"We've not only contacted the Department of Transportation, but Senators Moss and Bennett, as well as Congressman McKay," he added.

Professor Firmage pointed out that the letter wasn't written on BYU stationery and that his home address appeared on the letter. "The signature at the bottom, which included my titles as chairman and professor in the Department of Engineering at Brigham Young University, was only to let Mr. Burton know of my professional qualifications as an engineer," he said. "At no time have I presumed to speak for BYU or anyone other than our committee," he concluded.

Letter to Editor

11 Apr 1971

Canyon Deaths Evidence Of Need for Safer Road

Editor Herald:

Re: Another Tragic Loss of
Young Lives on Provo Canyon
Road.

There have been five young
lives lost now in about a two-
month period. It is becoming
more evident that the state
engineers were correct in their
proposal for a new road in this
canyon.

Safety and lives are more
important than a change in
ecology that really won't change
the canyon's beauty to any great
degree and in some areas may
even improve it.

The delay caused by some
ecology pressure groups may
cause more needless accidents. I
wonder how beautiful that
canyon now looks to the loved
ones of those dead because of
the bad curves and bad sight
distance on some areas of the

existing road.

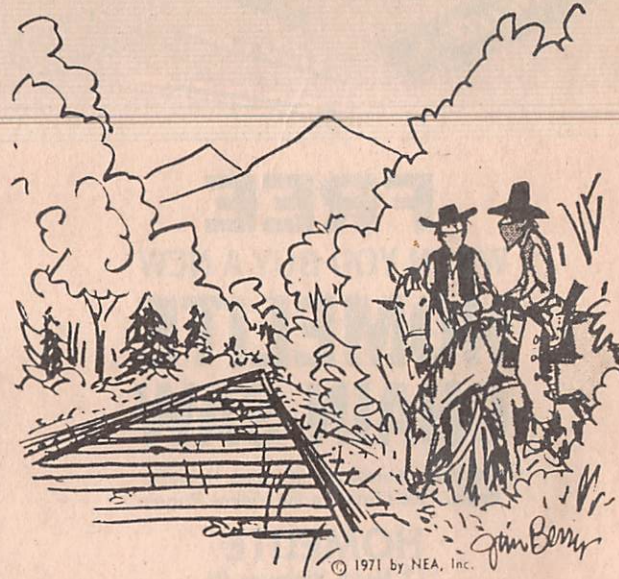
Let's make the tax money
count by supporting the state
engineers in their new road
proposal. They have in-
vestigated all aspects including
ecology and safety and have
stated the new road is
necessary.

With the ever-increasing
number of automobiles on the
highway and the amount of
traffic through Provo Canyon,
we are faced with the serious
problem of more accidents. Why
don't we use common sense and
widen this road to prevent as
many future accidents as
possible.

Very truly yours,
John A. Zirbes
City Engineer

Troy A. Mott
City Sealer of W&M

BERRY'S WORLD



"RAILPAX—PHOOEY!"

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